

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 836
By Bowers

A RESOLUTION to create a special joint committee to study the public health threat posed by Hepatitis C, including associated societal problems.

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is a silent killer, being largely asymptomatic until irreversible liver damage may have occurred; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C has been characterized by the World Health Organization as a disease of primary concern to humanity; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C currently infects approximately 4.5 million persons in the United States, and each year there are some 30,000 new infections nationwide; and

WHEREAS, the federal centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that approximately 12,000 persons die annually from the consequences of Hepatitis C, and this number continues to grow each year; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C is considered to be such a serious public health threat that the United States Department of Health and Human Services has initiated a comprehensive plan to address this significant health problem, beginning with the identification and notification of hundreds of thousands of persons who have been inadvertently exposed to Hepatitis C through blood transfusions; and

WHEREAS, in the absence of a vaccine for Hepatitis C, emphasis must be placed on identifying and implementing ways and means to increase awareness about and prevention of this deadly disease, including, but not limited to, the education of persons at high risk for Hepatitis C, as well as law enforcement officers, firefighters, health care professionals and workers, and the general public; and

WHEREAS, educating this state's health care community and indeed all citizens of Tennessee about Hepatitis C will ensure an optimal approach to controlling and preventing this lethal disease; and

WHEREAS, Hepatitis C potentially poses a major public health threat to Tennessee, and this General Assembly should work to lower the incidence and stem the circulation of Hepatitis C in Tennessee by studying all health and societal problems associated with the disease; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that there is hereby created a special joint committee to study the public health threat posed by Hepatitis C, including associated societal problems, and identify ways and means to stem the insidious spread of this lethal disease among this nation's and this state's populations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in addition to any other issues the committee deems appropriate, the special joint committee shall:

(1) Investigate ways and means, including funding sources, to increase awareness of Hepatitis C among this state's health care professionals and workers, including the provision of educational activities relative to Hepatitis C to the health care community; and

(2) In coordination with the Select Oversight Committee on Corrections, investigate, address, and seek to remedy problems resulting from the incidence and circulation of Hepatitis C among inmates, correctional officials and employees, and health care professionals and workers at correctional facilities administered by the Department of Correction and local governments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall consist of three (3) members of the House of Representatives and three (3) members of the Senate, to be appointed by the respective Speakers.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all appropriate state agencies shall provide assistance to the special joint committee upon request of the chair.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all legislative members of the special joint committee who are duly elected members of the General Assembly shall remain members of such committee until the committee reports its findings and recommendations to the General Assembly.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall be convened by the member with the most years of continuous service in the General Assembly, and at its first meeting shall elect a chair, vice chair, and such other officers the committee deems necessary.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the special joint committee shall timely report its findings and recommendations, including any proposed legislation, to the One Hundred Fourth General Assembly no later than February 1, 2005, at which time the committee shall cease to exist.